



## Winter Safety

With temperatures starting to drop and the chill in the air we all know that winter is quickly approaching. Safety is important in the winter months and there are specific steps you can take to have a safe winter season. Following are several things to be careful of during the winter season.

### Hypothermia

Hypothermia occurs when a person's body temperature falls below normal due to cold exposure. It can start with shivering and the person can become very lethargic (tired) and clumsy. If you suspect hypothermia, call 911. Remove wet clothing and wrap the person in warm blankets and clothes.

### Frostbite

If in the cold without proper clothing protection, people can develop frostbite. Frostbite oc-

curs when the skin and outer tissue becomes frozen. Fingers, toes, ears, and noses are often where frostbite occurs. They may look pale, gray, and blistered. Numbness or a burning sensation is a common complaint. If you suspect frostbite you can put the body part in warm (not hot) water, but do not rub frozen areas. If numbness continues, call a doctor.

### Sun Protection

You can get a sunburn even in the winter! Make sure you use sunscreen if you're going to be outdoors for long periods on a sunny day.

### Clothing

Proper clothing is the key to staying warm in winter. Dress in layers



which may include long johns, turtle necks, sweaters, warm socks, boots, gloves, hats, and a warm coat.

### Car Safety

Always properly defrost your car before heading on the road. Your windows and mirrors should allow full visibility. Keep a winter package in your car. It may include blankets, flashlights, road flares, and non-perishable snacks. Also have a couple of bottles of water. Carry a snow shovel in your trunk and a bag of salt in case you get stuck. Never leave your child in the car whether it's running or not. Many accidents can take place if the child hits the shifter, allowing the car to roll. Also, sitting in a running car without ventilation for long periods may lead to carbon monoxide poisoning.

## Fire Safety in the Winter

A key goal of winter is trying to stay warm. There are many devices you can use and practicing fire safety is a priority.

When using portable heaters make sure they are at least three feet away from everything such as furniture, curtains, and people. Clean the heater regularly, as dust and



lint buildup can cause a fire. If your cord is frayed or cracked have it fixed. Turn the heaters off when sleeping and always have an adult present if the heater is used around children. If using a wood stove or fireplace, make sure the ashes are in a covered metal container at least three feet away from things that could burn. Do not burn trash in the fireplace. Use a fireplace screen to prevent smoke from escaping.

Make sure your home has smoke alarms and change the batteries regularly. A good rule of thumb is to change

them every time there is a time change. Also have your family make a fire escape plan.

If you have a real Christmas tree, cut off two inches of the tree trunk at an angle for better water absorption by the fresh wood. Water your tree every day. A typical tree may use between a quart to a gallon of water every day. Keep your tree away from heat sources. Use miniature tree lights because they are less likely to overheat the needles. Inspect your lights for bare wires or cracks before putting them on the tree.

*Special thanks to Angela Marr, Nurse Family Partnership Nurse, for her help with this article!*

**The Berrien County Health Department has five locations to serve you:**

### **Benton Harbor**

769 Pipestone  
P.O. Box 706  
926-7121

M-139 Office

2106 S. M-139  
927-5623

School Based

870 Colfax Ave  
925-4500

### **Niles**

1205 N. Front St.  
684-2800

### **Three Oaks**

21 N. Elm  
756-2008

**Or visit us on the web at [www.berriencohlthdept.org](http://www.berriencohlthdept.org)**

## Berrien County Health

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### Step Up to a Healthier You!

December is Stepping Up to A Healthier You month. This month, the health department will bring you information about topics to keep you healthy during the hectic holiday season, including: Stress Management, Winter Safety, Healthy Eating for Christmas, and Alcohol Awareness. For questions about any of these topics, please call the health department at **926-7121**.

### Exercise in Winter

Winter makes many of us want to curl up under a blanket with a cup of hot chocolate, but it's important to remember that our bodies still need exercise to stay healthy. Here are a few tips for exercising in the winter:

- Walk around the mall
- Climb the stairs
- Create a simple "home gym" of a jump rope and a few dumbbells
- Consider joining a health club

If you exercise outside, remember:

- Stretch properly, since the cold tightens your muscles
- Dress in layers to keep yourself at a comfortable temperature
- Be sure to drink enough water, even if you don't sweat as much.



For more information about winter safety, call the Berrien County Health

Department at: **926-7121**

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